



The Senior Center Capacity Survey

A Report Prepared for the

Division of Aging

NC Department of Health and Human Services

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The Senior Center Capacity Survey

Why This Survey?

Developing the Senior Center Certification Process.

In 1998 a committee of representatives from Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers, the Division of Aging, older adults, and academia created a two-level model of senior centers of the future. In 1999, they reconvened to develop a set of criteria and a certification process that would recognize senior centers that exemplified those models—centers of merit and centers of excellence. Centers of merit would meet all those conditions that define an outstanding senior center, to which all senior centers in the state should aspire. The centers of excellence would meet all of those qualifications and go beyond them, especially in the areas of self-determination for older adults, advocacy, and the enhancement of quality of life. After two pilot-tests in late 1999, centers began applying for certification, and site review teams began visiting in 2000.

In its deliberations over certification criteria and as certification site visits were made, it became clear to the advisory committee that we did not have a clear picture of the range and diversity of centers throughout the state. How did reality compare to the standards of the certification process? In February 2001, surveys were mailed to all identified senior centers in North Carolina. The response rate was 78 percent (102 of 130). Our principal purposes in making this survey were to

- ♦ obtain a general description of senior centers for the Division of Aging's own use, the legislature, and other inquirers, near the time the state began the certification process
- ♦ identify areas in which senior centers need to build capacity
- ♦ identify areas in which most senior centers are doing well

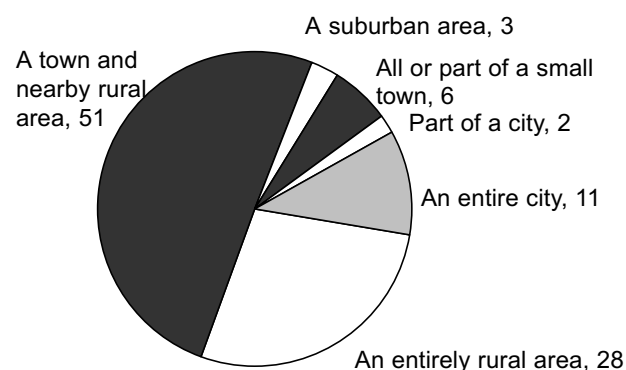
- ♦ determine whether rural centers and/or centers with few employees have greater needs for assistance to build their capacities.

Some Preliminary Definitions

Location of the Centers. The 28 percent of centers that serve entirely rural areas will be called *rural* in this report. More than half (51 percent) of all centers are located in towns/cities, but also serve the rural area surrounding the town; these will be called *town and rural*. The remaining 21 percent of centers serve suburban areas, towns (or parts of towns), or cities (or parts of cities); these are called *urban*.

Number of Employees. More than a quarter of NC senior centers (26 percent) have only one employee. The average (mean) number of employees, four, is the same for *rural*, *town and rural*, and *urban* centers, although the midpoint (median) is slightly smaller for the *rural* centers. Rural areas are more likely to have centers with only one employee, but they are just as likely as urban areas to have centers with four or more employees.

Chart 1. Number of Centers in Rural and Urban Areas



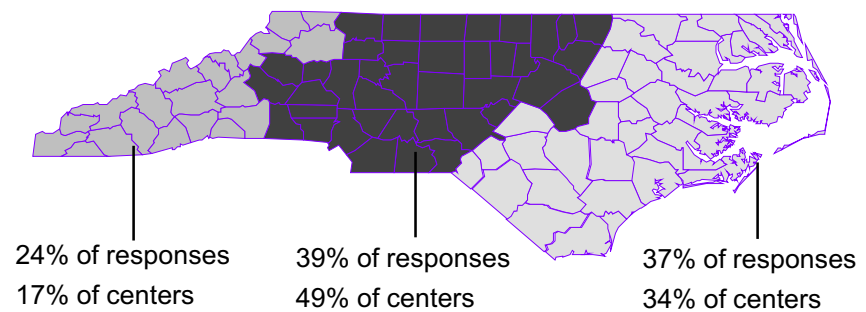
Region

- Nearly half of North Carolina's senior centers are in the piedmont region, but only 39 percent of the centers that answered the survey were. Western centers were the most likely to answer the survey.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- Town and rural* centers are the most common type of center in all three regions. However, the west is the most likely to have these centers. The piedmont is

Chart 2. Responses and Centers in the West, Piedmont, and East



more likely to have *urban* centers than the other two regions, and the east is more likely to have *rural* ones.

- The western part of the state is the most likely to have centers with four or more employees, while the one-employee centers are most widely found in the piedmont.

Center Size and Participation

- Fifty-four percent of centers say their greatest need is for more space or a new building.
- Twenty-nine percent of centers do not have enough program space to meet certification requirements (3,200 square feet).
- The average senior center program space (not including offices) is 6,640 square feet.
- The average attendance at North Carolina senior centers is 85 people per day.
- About 35 percent of centers have one or more satellites. The average number of satellites is two, and the average attendance at the satellites is 57.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- Rural* centers and *town and rural* centers are more likely to fall short of program space requirements than *urban* ones.
- Centers with four or more employees are most likely to meet program space requirements.
- However, centers with only one employee are more likely to meet the requirement than centers with two or three.
- Average attendance is greatest in *urban* centers and smallest in *rural* ones.
- Rural status doesn't affect the odds of having at least one satellite, but among centers that do

Chart 3. Sites of Senior Centers

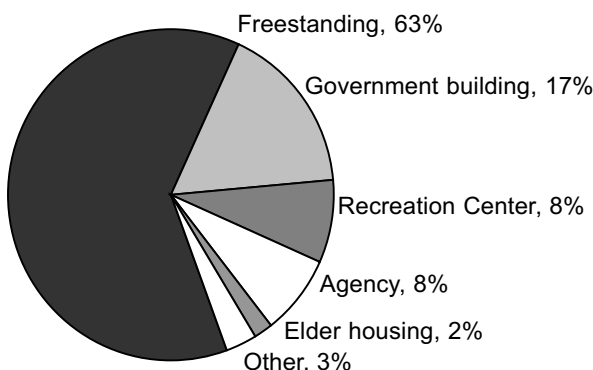
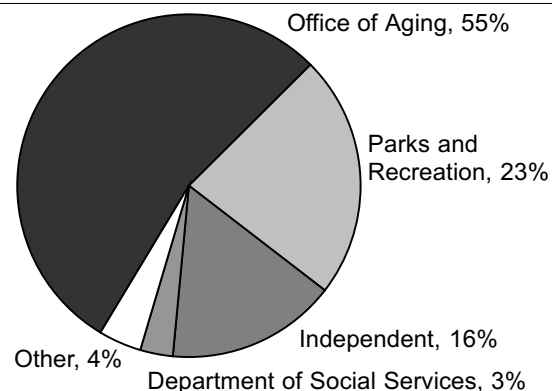


Chart 4. Sponsoring Organizations



have satellites, *urban* centers have more satellites and higher average attendance at them.

- ♦ Centers with more employees have more participants.
- ♦ Centers with more staff have more satellites and higher attendance (another interpretation of the link between these answers is that centers with more satellites and higher attendance have larger numbers of employees).

Site, Affiliation, and Tax Status

- ♦ Fifty-four percent of NC senior centers are public centers, and 46 percent are private not-for-profit.
- ♦ Fifty-five percent are run by a local department/council/office of aging.
- ♦ About half of the office of aging centers are public and half not-for-profit.
- ♦ Most of the other senior centers are either run by local parks and recreation departments (primarily public agencies) or are independent centers, most of which are being run as private not-for-profit agencies.
- ♦ Sixty-three percent are free-standing centers. The remainder tend to be housed in public buildings of various types. Independent centers are most likely to be free-standing.

Budget and Funding

- ♦ The average senior center budget is \$213,005, but the midpoint (median) is only \$112,878. Twenty-two percent of the centers have budgets of \$50,000 or less.
- ♦ Centers run by public (county) offices, departments, or councils of aging have the highest budgets while not-for profit offices, departments, or councils of aging have the lowest. See table 1.

Table 1. Total Center Budget by Subgroups

	N	Mean	Median	% under \$50,000	% over \$500,000
All Centers	91	\$213,005	\$112,878	22	8
<i>Rural-Urban</i>					
Rural	25	187,569	125,000	12	4
Town and Rural	46	169,764	86,248	28	7
Urban	20	344,254	126,223	20	5
<i>Size of Staff</i>					
1 employee	22	81,982	62,000	36	0
2	16	69,318	65,025	38	0
3	15	128,599	112,878	27	0
4 or more	38	382,679	182,170	5	13
<i>Affiliation</i>					
County office on aging	29	367,778	123,500	17	10
Nonprofit office on aging	22	122,672	64,000	41	5
Parks and recreation	19	140,868	120,796	16	0
Independent	15	148,330	97,000	7	0

Table 2. Percent of Centers Receiving Major and Minor Funding from Selected Sources

Source	Percent of Funding Received			N
	>30%	<30%	None	
Local government	62	36	2	97
Home and Community Care Block Grant	47	30	22	95
State funds	14	78	8	91
Grants	7	72	22	88
United Way	4	36	60	89
Fees	2	61	36	88
Donations/fund raising	2	88	10	90
Other*	10	45	45	

*Includes cost-sharing (2), building rent, FEMA, in-kind services, investment income, Medicaid, National Council of Senior Citizens Employment program, private pay for home delivered meals, and Shepherd's Center

Note: Rows may total more or less than 100% due to rounding.

- ♦ Fully 41 percent of not-for-profit offices, departments, or councils of aging have budgets of \$50,000 per year or lower.
- ♦ Center directors were asked to rate funding sources as primary (30 percent or more of the budget), secondary (less than 30 percent), or noncontributing. Some 92 percent of centers count on state funds in their budgets (primary or secondary), although the most widespread primary funding sources are local government and Home and Com-

Table 3. Combinations of Major Funding Sources by Center Affiliation.

Number of centers/Major funding sources

Public Departments or Councils of Aging

(24 answered all 7 questions)

- 12 Local government only
- 6 Both HCCBG and local government
- 4 HCCBG only
- 1 Both local and state government
- 1 Both local government and fees

Not-for Profit Councils or Departments of Aging

(18 answered all 7 questions)

- 8 HCCBG only
- 3 Local government only
- 2 Both HCCBG and state funds
- 2 Both HCCBG and grants
- 1 Both HCCBG and local government
- 1 Both HCCBG and United Way
- 1 Has 4 sources of funding (local government, state funds, grants, and donations), none of which accounts for more than 30 percent.

Parks and Recreation

(19 answered all 7 questions)

- 14 Local government only
- 1 HCCBG only
- 1 Both HCCBG and local government
- 1 Both local government and fees
- 1 Both HCCBG and state funds
- 1 Has 4 sources of funding (state funds, United Way, grants, and donations), none of which accounts for more than 30 percent

Independent

(14 answered all 7 questions)

- 3 HCCBG only
- 3 Local government only
- 2 Both HCCBG and grants
- 2 Have no sources that account for more than 30%. (One of these has all 7 sources and 1 has all except fees.)
- 1 Both HCCBG and local government
- 1 Both HCCBG and state funds
- 1 Both HCCBG and donations
- 1 Both local government and United Way

Note: 75 of 102 (74%) answered all seven questions.

munity Care Block Grant (HCCBG; see table 2.)

- ♦ Home and Community Care Block Grant money is the most likely primary funder of not-for-profit council of aging centers and independent ones. See Table 3 for the distribution of primary funders by center affiliation.
- ♦ Local government is the most likely primary funder of centers affiliated with public departments of aging and with parks and recreation.
- ♦ About 65 percent of centers charge fees for at least some programs; just over half of these offer scholarships to the programs with fees.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ *Town and rural* centers have the smallest budgets.
- ♦ *Urban* centers are more likely to charge participants.
- ♦ When *rural* centers do charge, they are more likely to offer scholarships than the other two categories.
- ♦ Not surprisingly, centers with more employees have larger budgets.
- ♦ Centers with one or three employees are more likely to charge. Centers with two or four employees are more likely to offer scholarships when they do charge.

Who Comes to the Center?

- ♦ Thirty-seven percent of senior center participants are in their 70s. Thirty-seven percent are younger (including 7 percent under 60), and 23 percent are older (including 4 percent who are 90 or older).
- ♦ About 23 percent of senior center participants are men, although about 40 percent of older people are men.
- ♦ About 27 percent of senior center participants are African American or Black. This is slightly higher than the percentage of older adults of African American heritage in North Carolina.
- ♦ Less than a quarter of centers have any Latino participants, and those that do report only about 3 percent of their participants with that heritage.
- ♦ A third of centers have other ethnic minority groups (besides African Americans or Latinos), but, on average, only about 5 percent of their participants are members of these groups.
- ♦ About 8 percent of people who go to senior centers need help to get around (i.e., use a walker, wheelchair, or help from another person.)
- ♦ Eighty-one percent of centers say that at least one of their participants has some form of dementia. Of centers with any participants who have dementia, only 5 percent of participants have this condition.
- ♦ Large majorities of centers report increases over the past five years in the total number of participants (82 percent) and the number of men attending their centers (74 percent). Fifty-three percent report an increase in frail participants, and 52 percent report an increase in younger participants. Forty-seven percent reported an increase in

members of ethnic minority groups, and 40 percent reported an increase in participants over age 90.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ There are no meaningful rural-urban differences in the characteristics of people who attend the senior centers, except that *urban* centers are a little more likely to include people with dementia.
- ♦ Centers with smaller numbers of employees (one or two) are much less likely to include participants with dementia.

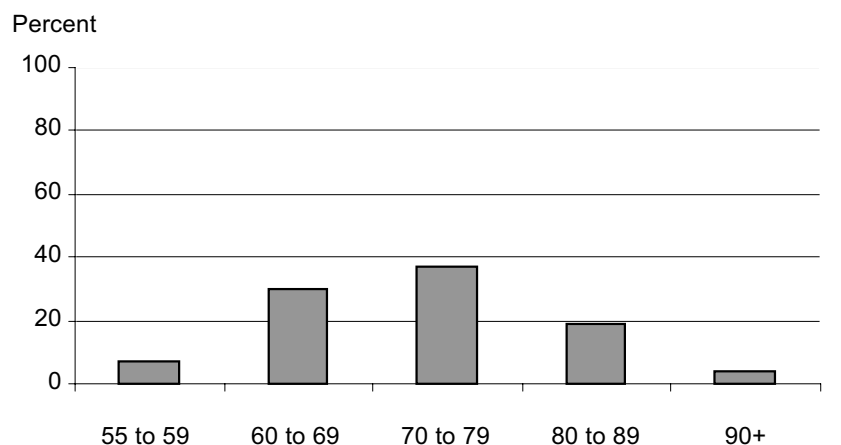
"What do you consider to be the greatest strength of your center?"

"Friendly, flexible staff who show an interest in our participants and eagerly receive their ideas for new avenues of classes, services, etc."

"What do you consider to be the greatest strength of your center?"

". . .the loyalty and support of our participants."

Chart 5. Age of Center Participants



What Do They Do There?

Most Popular Activities

- When center directors were asked to name the three most popular activities in their centers, the most frequently cited were various kinds of exercise and fitness activities, and crafts (each reported by more than half of the centers), followed by trips and “cards and games” (reported by more than one-quarter of centers).
- Twenty-four percent of centers said Bingo was one of their three most popular activities (compared to 28 percent for all other cards and games combined). There is disagreement among senior center personnel about whether this constitutes a limitation in programming.

Meals

- Sixty-eight percent of centers offer both congregate and home-delivered meals. Only 15 percent have no nutrition programs.

Equipment and Activities

- The majority of centers rated a variety of facilities and activities as “adequate” or “excellent.”
 - Almost all centers had TVs with videos or DVDs (89 percent) and educational speakers and classes (83 percent).
 - More than two-thirds of the centers said they had “adequate” or “excellent” trips outside the local area, craft classes, and wellness classes.
 - More than half rated their exercise equipment, dancing, and crafts facilities as “adequate” or “excellent.”

Outdoor Facilities

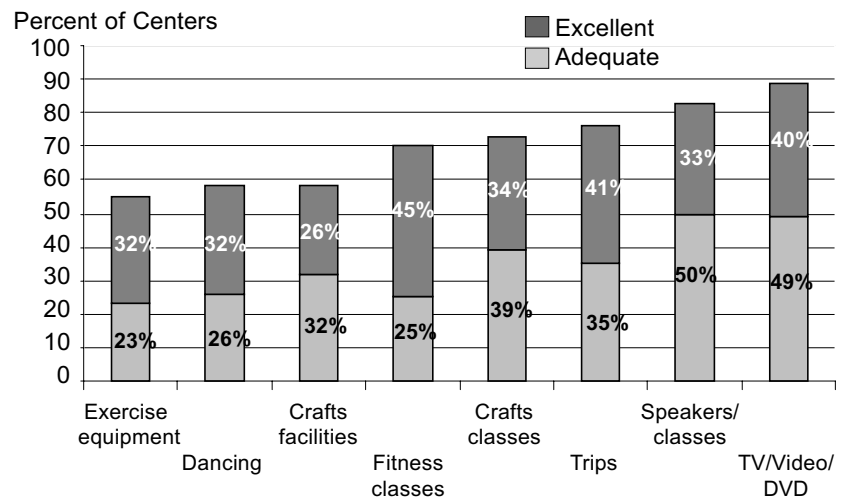
- Walking paths, outdoor recreational areas, and outdoor sitting areas are nonexistent or inadequate in more than half of the centers, although this may not be a problem if similar facilities are offered nearby, and the center has chosen not to duplicate other community resources.

Computers

Older adults are becoming increasingly interested in the recreational, communications, and informational use of computers.

- Almost two-thirds of centers report having computers, although nearly half that have them say they are inadequate.

Chart 6. Adequate or Excellent Activities and Facilities



“What do you consider to be the greatest strength of your center?”

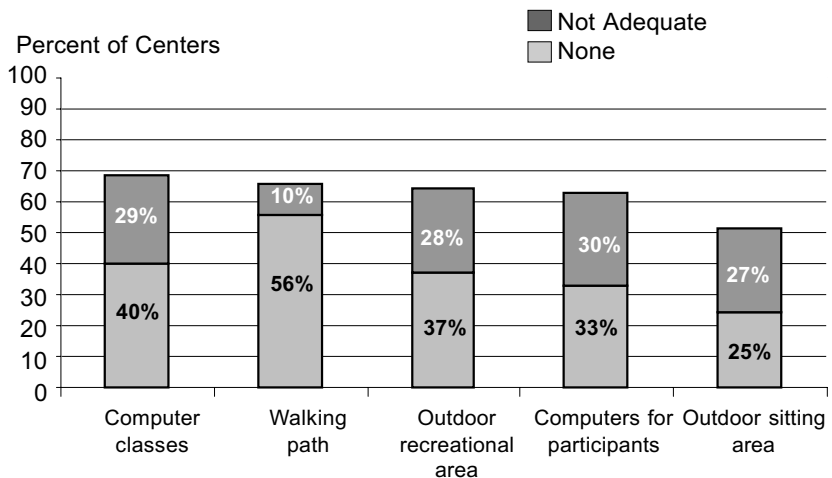
“Diverse activities to provide programs of interest for all needs: education, health, fitness, recreation, social, cultural, creative.”

- ♦ About 60 percent of centers offer classes in computer, but about half of these centers feel the offerings are inadequate.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ *Urban* sites are less likely to have nutrition programs than *rural* or *town and rural* centers.
- ♦ *Town and rural* centers are the least likely to have adequate computers and computer classes.
- ♦ *Rural* centers have more walking trails but only slightly more outdoor facilities overall.

Chart 7. Lacking or Inadequate Activities and Facilities



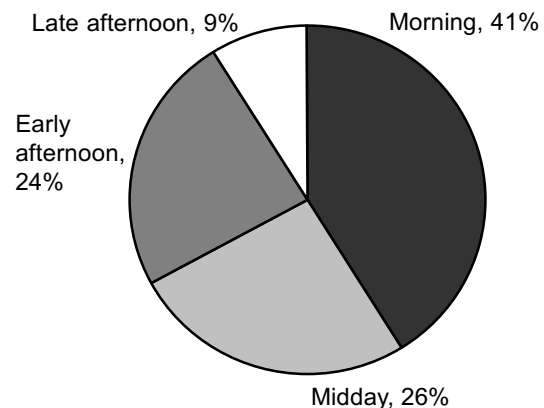
Hours and Scheduling

- ♦ The average senior center is open 9 hours a day, with only 2 percent reporting that they are open fewer than the 8 hours a day required for certification.
- ♦ The most common senior center hours (in 41 percent of centers) are 8:00 to 5:00, followed by 8:30 to 5:00 or 8:00 to 4:30.
- ♦ Thirty-eight percent of centers have some weekend or evening hours—31 percent have evening and 14 percent have weekend hours. (Centers certified as excellent must have evening or weekend hours.)
- ♦ Weekend hours are short, sporadic, and often geared to specific activities, such as trips, dances, and special classes. Evening hours are more frequent and regular.
- ♦ More than half of the centers with evening hours are open three nights a week or more.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ *Urban* centers are substantially more likely to have evening hours than the other two groups. However, *rural* centers that have evening hours tend to be open more nights a week than other centers.
- ♦ Centers with more employees are more likely to offer evening hours.

Chart 8. Scheduling of Center Activities



"What do you consider to be the greatest strength of your center?"

"Our greatest strength is in our staff. We are very fortunate to have qualified, responsible and caring staff persons."

How Many Programs?

- Centers of Merit are required to provide 9 or more activities per week, while Centers of Excellence are required to provide at least 15. The survey did not include site team guidelines for counting activities, and we suspect that the number provided by self-report is somewhat larger than a site visit team would identify. However, by their own count, more than half of the centers say they offer 15 or more activities per week.
- Mornings are the most heavily scheduled times. Forty-one percent of senior center activities are scheduled before 11:00.
- After 3:00 is a program vacuum. Only 9 percent of center activities are scheduled at that time, and 30 percent of senior centers say they have no activities scheduled at that time throughout the week.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- Urban* centers have substantially more activities per week than the other two types of centers. However, it is still true of *rural* centers that more than half report 15 or more activities per week.
- Urban* centers are most likely to have programming in the late afternoon.
- Small staffs are less likely to schedule activities in the late afternoon than large ones.

Center Strengths and Needs

- Centers identify their greatest strengths, in order, as their staffs, the variety of activities they offer, and their participants.
- When asked what one thing they could do or buy to make their centers better, space and/or a new building was the majority answer. Better transportation (especially the need for a center bus or van) was the second most frequently cited need.

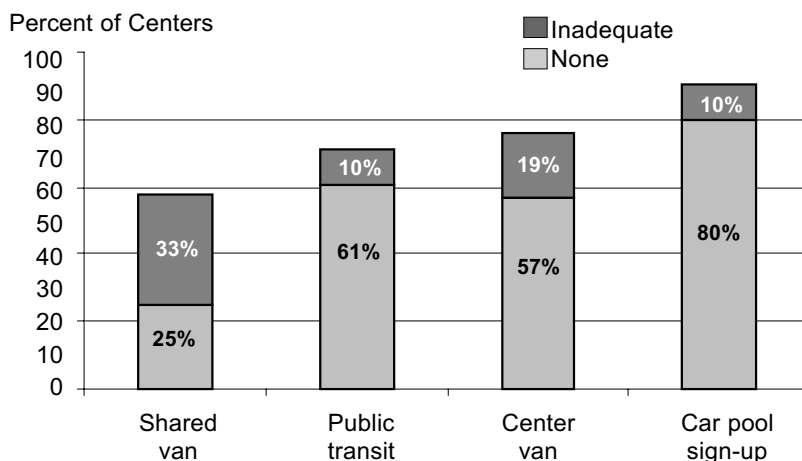
Transportation

- Forty percent of centers said that public transit, shared van service, and center van service were all either inadequate for their needs or unavailable to them.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- Rural* centers are more likely than *urban* or *town and rural* centers to say that either they do not have center vans or the ones they have are inadequate. However, they are similar to other types of centers in their rating of adequacy in public transit and shared van services (such as county vans).

Chart 9. Lacking or Inadequate Transportation



"What do you consider to be the greatest strength of your center?"

"The closeness of our participants and their caring about each other."

Administrative Issues

The survey included information about administrative issues that the Task Force for Senior Center Development had identified as important for certification. These included the role and composition of advisory boards, work with other helping organizations in the community, the provision of volunteer opportunities, and the training of paid employees. While the task force had set certification standards for these, we wanted to see how close these were to administrative practices in centers throughout the state.

In the area of personnel, the task force felt that there was not enough information to set standards. No one really knew how educational requirements, experience needed, and salaries varied from one center to another. In fact, we did not know what positions made up an average senior center staff. This survey provided a start in learning about these personnel issues.

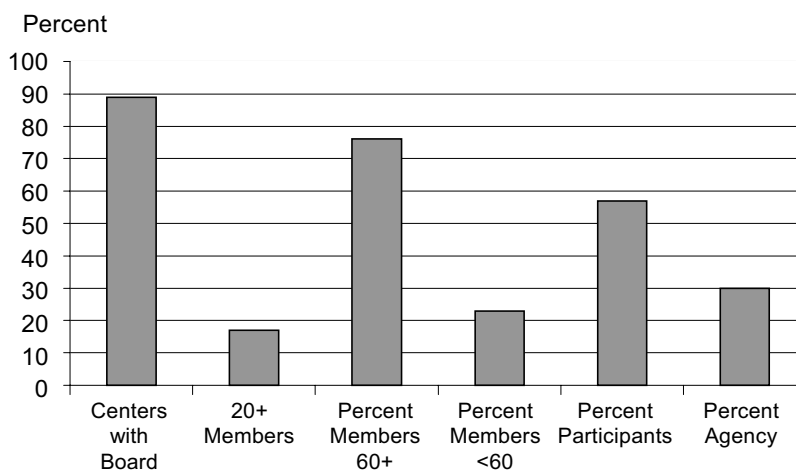
"What do you consider to be the greatest strength of your center?"

"The Seniors—their support, enthusiasm, sense of ownership."

Advisory Boards

- ♦ Most centers (89 percent) have advisory boards or committees.
- ♦ The average size of these boards is 14.
- ♦ About 17 percent have boards of 20 or more, which may prove inefficient.
- ♦ Senior center certification requires that at least 60 percent of the advisory board be made up of people ages 60 or older. Twenty-four percent of centers do not meet this requirement.
- ♦ More than half of the average board is made up of senior center participants; about 30 percent are representatives from other agencies.

Chart 10. Characteristics of Advisory Boards



Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ Centers with one or two employees tend to have more participants and fewer agency representatives on their boards. Thus, they are more likely to be in compliance with the age requirement.

Collaboration with Other Community Stakeholders

- Not including their own parent organizations, senior centers were most likely to have ongoing collaboration with councils/departments of aging (77 percent), health departments (74 percent), community colleges (62 percent), parks and recreation (58 percent), and departments of social services (52 percent).
- Senior centers were least likely to have ongoing collaboration with nursing homes (17 percent), assisted living facilities (21 percent), family resource centers (25 percent), and mental health centers (27 percent), though many worked with these through referrals or on an “as needed” basis.

Volunteers

- All but one of the 102 centers reporting have volunteers in their center.
- The average number of volunteers per center is 109, but 47 percent of centers have 30 or fewer volunteers, while 28 percent have more than 100.
- About 82 percent of senior center volunteers are, themselves, age 60 or older.
- A little less than a third of senior center volunteers help in the center itself. For example they may answer phones, teach classes, or work on the center newsletter.

Chart 11. Ongoing Cooperation/Collaboration

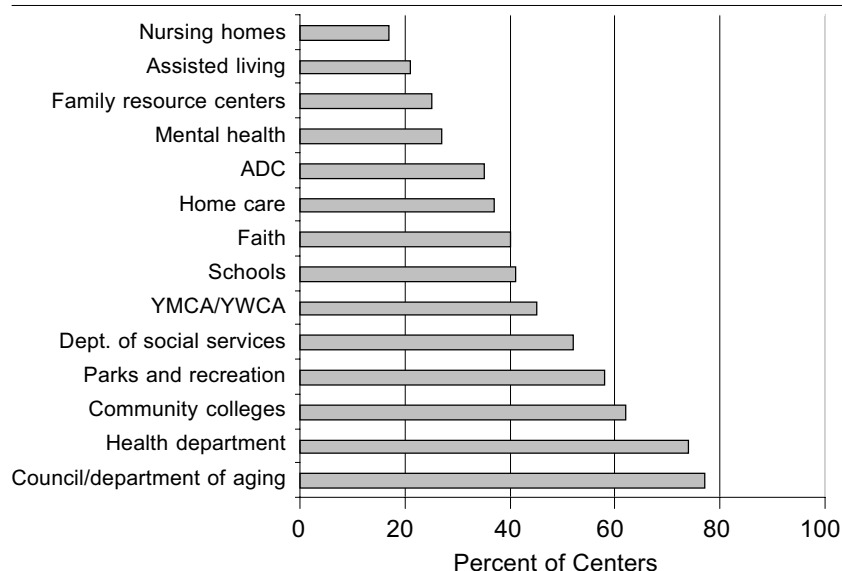


Chart 12. Number of Volunteers by Percent of Centers

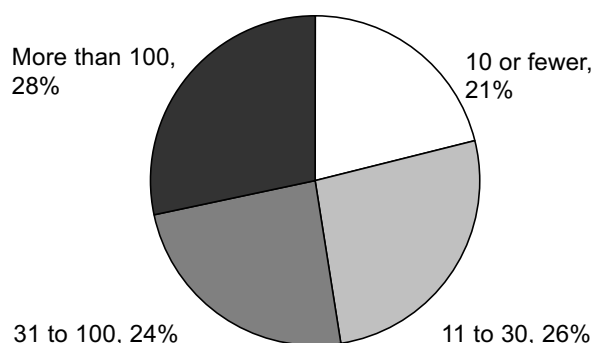
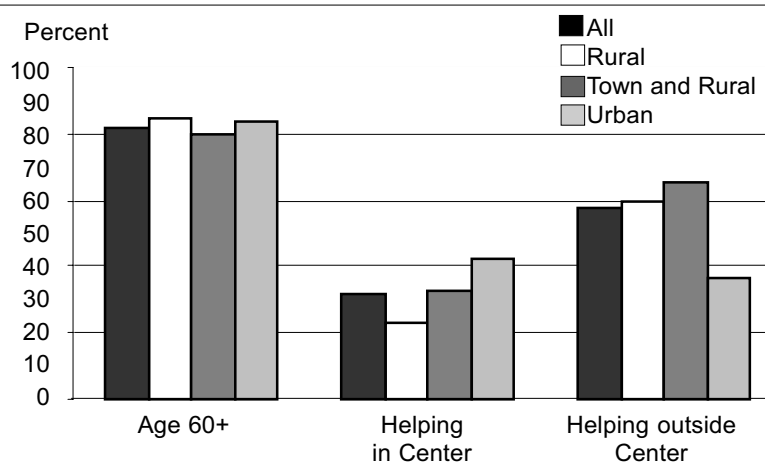


Chart 13. Characteristics of Volunteers



- ♦ More than half (58 percent) of senior center volunteers help people outside of the center. For example, they might deliver home-delivered meals or mentor children.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ *Urban* centers have somewhat larger numbers of volunteers.
- ♦ Centers with more paid staff tend also to have more volunteers.

Paid Personnel

- ♦ Staff composition varies substantially among centers.
- ♦ All centers have a director or someone with another title in a similar role, but no other positions are found throughout all centers.
- ♦ The average director is almost 48 years old and has a 4-year college degree, 9 years of previous experience, and 8 years at his or her current center.
- ♦ The seven other key staff positions (found in at least 10 percent of centers) are, in order of frequency, support staff, nutrition site managers, coordinators of specific programs, maintenance personnel, fitness personnel, activities directors, and senior center assistants/program assistants (see table 4.)

Table 4. Top Ten Personnel Categories

Personnel Category	Centers with position (%)
Directors (or equivalent)	100
Support Staff	36
Nutrition Site Managers	17
Coordinators	16
Maintenance Personnel	16
Fitness Personnel	12
Activities Directors	10
Program/Senior Center Assistants	10

Chart 14. Number of Paid Employees

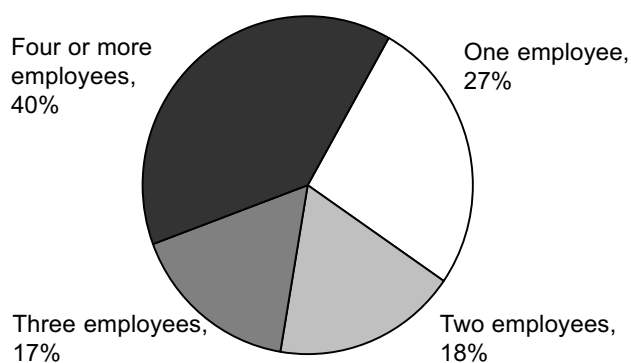


Table 5. Comparison of Most Widespread Staff Positions in Senior Centers by Number of Employees

Number of Staff Members			
1	2	3	4 or more
Director (100%)	Director (100%) 50% have one of the following positions (17% each) Assistants (senior center or program) Nutrition site managers Support staff	Director (100%) Support staff (47%) 71% have one or more of the following positions (18% each) Activities directors Assistant directors Center aides Nutrition site managers	Director (100%) Support staff (62%) Maintenance (40%) Coordinators (32%) Nutrition site managers (28%) Fitness (25%)

- ♦ The configuration of staff varies considerably with the number of employees as shown in table 5.
- ♦ Among key positions, more than half of receptionists (one category of support staff), nutrition site managers, and maintenance personnel are age 60 or older themselves. Substantial numbers (but not the majority) of secretaries, coordinators of specific programs, activities directors, and senior center assistants are also age 60 and over, as shown in table 6.
- ♦ The majority of nutrition site managers, maintenance personnel, and senior center assistants work part-time schedules. About half of receptionists and secretaries work part time.
- ♦ Directors, fitness personnel, and activities directors are more likely to have a four-year degree than any other level of education. Administrative support staff (such as office managers, administrative assistants, and business managers) are most likely to have two-year degrees, and coordinators of specific programs are about equally likely to have four-year degrees or a high school

education. People in the other key positions typically have a high school diploma or GED.

- ♦ Despite their job responsibilities, directors of senior centers have an average annual salary of only \$28,226. Others in positions that typically are filled by people with college degrees (fitness personnel and activities directors and about half of the coordinators of specific programs) earn, on average, less than \$23,000 per year for a full-time position.

Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ Directors of *urban* centers and directors who supervise more employees have higher average salaries. However, these differences are not significant when one controls for the overall size of the center's budget, the number of years the director has worked at that center, and his or her education (all of which increase salary).
- ♦ *Rural* areas are more likely to have centers with only one employee, but they are just as likely as *urban* areas to have centers with four or more employees.

Table 6. Characteristics of Personnel in Key Positions

Position	Mean Age	60+ (%)	Full time (%)	Education (Modal) ^a	Mean Salary ^b
Director	48	14	82	BA/BS	28,226 ^c
Support Staff					
<i>Receptionists</i>	59	62	50	HS/GED	\$13,512
<i>Secretarial</i>	52	29	50	HS/GED	17,545
<i>Administrative Support</i>	47	0	71	2-year degree	23,821
Nutrition Site Managers	59	52	27	HS/GED	17,592
Coordinators of Specific Programs	49	24	76	HS/GED & BA/BS ^d	21,522
Maintenance	54	57	13	HS/GED	13,697
Fitness Personnel	40	0	58	BA/BS	22,413
Activities Directors	54	30	50	BA/BS	22,917
Senior Center or Program Assistants	52	40	45	HS/GED	21,742

^aThe answer chosen by the largest number of people, though not necessarily a majority.

^bStandardized to full time for comparison.

^cThe director's salary is not standardized. This average reflects only those 82 directors who work full time.

^d44 percent each.

Chart 15. Director's Education

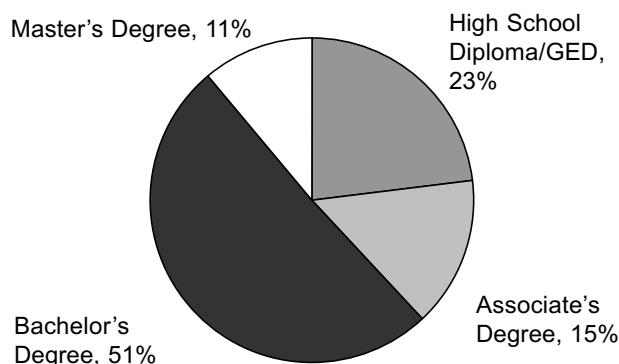


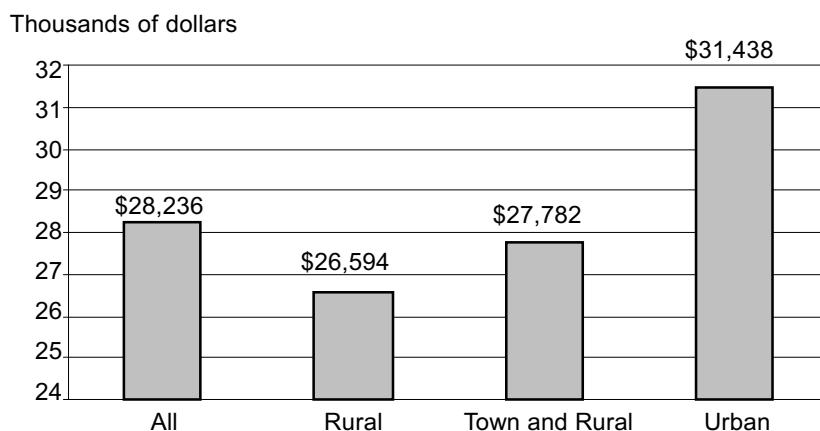
Table 7. Areas of Directors' Greatest Interest in Training

Programming excellence
Planning
Evaluation/Quality assurance
Resource development
Administration/operations
Art of supervising staff and volunteers
Marketing, publicity, and community relations

Training

- ♦ To meet senior center certification requirements, each full-time senior center employee must receive at least 15 hours of training per year, including in-service training. When asked if they thought their centers would meet that requirement right now, more than 46 percent of centers answered "Yes, definitely," and another 26 percent said "Probably" (72 percent total).
- ♦ Directors chose the topics listed in table 7 (in order of greatest preference) when asked about their own desire for continuing education. These preferences were used in designing the content of the Ann Johnson Institute for Senior Center Management, a curriculum sponsored by the Division of Aging.

Chart 16. Director's Average Salary by Location of Center



Did rurality or staff size make a difference?

- ♦ The *rural* centers were the least likely to answer positively that their personnel received adequate training.
- ♦ Unexpectedly, 81 percent of the centers with only one paid employee (the director) answered that that employee was getting enough training annually, a higher rate than for centers with more employees.

Summary

The survey was designed for four purposes. It is fitting to return to each of these and summarize what we have learned.

A Description of Centers

The survey provided a wealth of descriptive data including the physical size of centers, their location, the number and demographic description of their participants, their budgets and sources of funding, and their staffing patterns. More detailed information is available from the Division on Aging or CARES.

Areas in Which Senior Centers Need to Build Capacity

Several areas stand out in this report because substantial numbers of centers are functioning with less than optimum resources. These include physical space, computers and computer classes, number of employees, and transportation to the center for those unable to drive their own cars. Centers are also reporting little activity in the center after 3:00 in the afternoons.

Although we have no standards against which to measure budgets or salaries, it is worth noting that more than 20 percent of centers have budgets of \$50,000 or less. The average salary for directors of the centers is \$28,226, and the average salary for other positions which are usually filled by people with four-year degrees is \$23,000 or less.

Areas in Which Senior Centers Are Doing Well

By the centers' own reports, their outstanding strengths are the quality of their staffs, the variety of activities they offer, and their participants.

Centers appear to be attracting a diverse group of participants. Although most centers are still attracting women more than men, most have seen a growth in

the number of men in their center in the past 5 years. The majority of centers believe that their centers have "adequate" or "excellent" TV/video/DVD equipment, speakers and educational classes, trips, crafts classes, wellness classes, exercise equipment, dancing, and crafts facilities.

Almost all centers are open at least eight hours a day, and most are open nine; more than a third are open on evenings and weekends. More than half of the centers report offering 15 or more activities for participants during the average week.

Volunteers are a part of almost every senior center, and these are helping both in the center itself and in the community in programs sponsored in full or in part by the senior centers. Paid staff appear to be receiving adequate amounts of training, and directors express substantial interest in further training for themselves, which the Division on Aging has helped to make available.

Do Location and Number of Employees Make a Difference?

Urban centers have a longer list of advantages than *rural* and *town and rural* centers (a complete list appears in the appendix), but each type of center has some advantages and some disadvantages. In most cases, *rural* centers and *town and rural* centers are similar. There is no indication that *rural* centers are particularly disadvantaged in important areas. The *town and rural* centers have two important disadvantages—the smallest budgets and the least adequate supply of computers and computer classes for participants.

Centers with larger numbers of employees have bigger budgets, more participants, and more volunteers, along with some less important advantages (a complete list also appears in the appendix). However, not all of the advantages fall to the centers with more employees.

Do Rural Status and Number of Employees Matter?

Where rural status matters

The Rural Urban Continuum—Rural smallest and Urban largest

- ♦ Number of people attending satellites (but not whether they have satellites).
- ♦ Number of people coming to the center.
- ♦ Director's opinion that all their staff members meet the standards of annual training necessary for certification.
- ♦ Collaboration with other organizations:
 - ♦ *Town and rural* more likely to collaborate with councils/departments of aging.
 - ♦ *Urban* centers more likely to collaborate with parks and recreation.
 - ♦ *Rural* centers more likely to collaborate with social services and home-care agencies.

Town and Rural Centers—the largest category of centers

- ♦ Have the smallest budgets.
- ♦ Are most likely to report an increase in younger participants and least likely to report an increase in participants age 90 or older.
- ♦ Are the least likely to have adequate computers and computer classes.
- ♦ Are more likely to have an advisory board.

Rural Centers

- ♦ Are more likely to rate center vans as inadequate or nonexistent, but are no worse or better off than other centers in public transit and shared van service.
- ♦ Are the least likely to report an increase in younger participants (55 to 59).
- ♦ Are slightly less likely to have weekend hours than the other two groups.
- ♦ Those that have evening hours tend to be open more nights a week than other centers. (*Urban* centers are more likely to have evening hours than the other two groups).
- ♦ *Rural* directors have been at their centers longer.

- ♦ Although *urban* centers are more likely than *rural* or *town and rural* centers to charge fees for some activities, when rural centers do charge, they are more likely to offer scholarships than the other two categories.

Urban Centers

- ♦ Are substantially more likely to have evening hours than the other two groups.
- ♦ Are a little more likely to include participants with dementia.
- ♦ Are less likely to have nutrition programs.
- ♦ Are less likely to have nutrition site managers on payroll.
- ♦ Are less likely to report an increase over the past five years in total number of participants and men.
- ♦ Are somewhat more likely to report an increase in frail participants and those age 90 or older.
- ♦ Are more likely to charge participants for some programs/activities.
- ♦ Are more likely to have activities programmed from 3:00 p.m. until closing than other centers, though this is still not a strong programming time for *urban* centers either.
- ♦ Are more likely to have enough program space.
- ♦ Have somewhat more volunteers.
- ♦ Have substantially more activities per week than the other two types of centers.
- ♦ Are less likely to have large boards (20 members or more).
- ♦ Are more likely to have directors with a four-year college degree or higher.
- ♦ Have higher directors' salaries, but not when one controls for center budget, years at their center, and education.
- ♦ Volunteers in *urban* centers are more likely to help with jobs in the center itself, while those in *rural* and *town and rural* centers are more likely to help outside the center (e.g., delivering meals, mentoring children).

When *Rural* Status Doesn't Matter Or Matters Very Slightly

- ♦ Number of employees.
- ♦ Sources of funding.
- ♦ Adequacy of activities and facilities other than computers.
- ♦ Hours of operation.
- ♦ Most demographic characteristics of participants.
- ♦ The percent of centers that report at least 60 percent of their board members are age 60 or older.
- ♦ Age of volunteers.
- ♦ Type of personnel on staff (except nutrition site managers).

Where small numbers of employees matter

Areas where centers with larger numbers of employees do better

- ♦ Number of people coming to the center.
- ♦ Number of satellites and people attending satellites.
- ♦ Size of budget.
- ♦ Centers with more employees are more likely to offer evening hours.
- ♦ Programming from 3:00 p.m. until closing.
- ♦ Centers with more employees are more likely to include participants with dementia. They are more likely to report an increase among members of ethnic minority groups, frail participants, and participants aged 90 or older.
- ♦ Centers with three or more paid employees are more likely to have an advisory board.
- ♦ The average number of board members increases as the number of paid employees increases.
- ♦ Centers with more paid staff tend to also have more volunteers.
- ♦ The types of staff the center has—for example, only centers with four or more employees have maintenance staff. The larger the staff, the more likely it is to include support personnel.
- ♦ Directors of larger centers are more likely to be college-educated.
- ♦ Directors of large centers have higher salaries, but not if one controls for center budget, years at the center, and education.

Areas where centers with small numbers of employees do better

- ♦ Centers with small staffs have slightly more outdoor sitting areas and walking trails.
- ♦ They are more likely to report an increase in the number of men and the number of younger participants.
- ♦ Centers with one or two employees are more likely than centers with more employees to be in compliance with the certification requirement that 60 percent or more of the board members must be age 60 or older.
- ♦ Centers with one or two employees have more center participants and fewer agency representatives on their boards. (This has pros and cons.)
- ♦ Directors of centers in which they are the only employee are more likely to say that all of their employees would meet the training standards necessary for certification than those with staff members under them.

Where small numbers of employees doesn't matter or doesn't matter much

- ♦ Sources of funding.
- ♦ Outdoor recreation areas.
- ♦ Adequacy of computers and computer classes.
- ♦ Adequacy of other activities and facilities.
- ♦ Hours of operation.
- ♦ Most demographic characteristics of center participants.
- ♦ Age of volunteers.

Where number of employees seems to matter, but pattern is not clear

- ♦ Centers with four staff member are most likely to have enough program space to meet the certification standards, but centers with only one staff member centers are second most likely to have sufficient space.
- ♦ Centers with one or three employees are more likely to charge participants for some activities/programs. Centers with two or four employees are more likely to offer scholarships when they do charge.
- ♦ Centers with two employees are the most likely to offer a nutrition program.

- ♦ **Transportation**
 - ♦ Centers with three or more employees have more “adequate” or “excellent” public transit and car-pool sign-up.
 - ♦ Centers with one employee are less likely than the other groups to have “adequate” or “excellent” shared van service. However, they are as happy as or more happy than all the other groups with their center vans.
 - ♦ Centers with two employees are less likely than the others to have “adequate” or “excellent” center vans.
- ♦ Centers with one employee and those with four (in that order) are the most likely to include Hispanic participants.
- ♦ Centers with only one employee and those with three employees (in that order) have a larger percentage of their volunteers helping in the community.
- ♦ **Collaboration with other organizations:**
 - ♦ One-employee centers are more likely to collaborate with nursing homes, health departments, and adult day care (centers with four or more employees are also likely to collaborate with day care).
 - ♦ Two-employee centers are more likely to collaborate with councils or departments of aging and faith communities.
 - ♦ Those with three employees collaborate with everyone (ranking either first or second in collaboration with every group).

Thanks to all the senior center directors who responded to the questionnaire.

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 The final version of this report will be available through the Division's website
<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/index.htm>

Thanks also to the participants at the New Hanover and Garland senior centers for permission to use their photographs. Photos © Mary Anne Salmon, 2001.



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